

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

PRESS CONFERENCE

OF

HONORABLE ROBERT S. McNAMARA

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

THE PENTAGON

Tuesday, October 23, 1962

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SECRETARY MC NAMARA: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. As much as I enjoy your friendship and companionship, I don't plan to make this a nightly occasion, but I do have three announcements I would like to give to you tonight.

First, as many of you know, the President, thirty minutes ago, at 7:00 P.M., signed the Proclamation ordering the interdiction of offensive weapons moving into Cuba, and under the terms of that Proclamation, I have taken the necessary steps to deploy our forces to be in a position to make effective the quarantine at 2:00 P.M., tomorrow, Greenwich time. That will be the equivalent of 10:00 A.M., Eastern Daylight Time.

Secondly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have designated Admiral George Anderson, Chief of Naval Operations, as their Executive Agent for the operation of the quarantine and the quarantine forces.

In turn Admiral Dennison, Commander in Chief, Atlantic, is the responsible unified Commander. And operating under him in direct charge of the quarantine task force will be Vice Admiral Alfred Ward, Commander of the Second Fleet. Admiral Ward's task force will be known as Task Force 136. It will be composed of major naval units including carriers, cruisers, destroyers, and the associated logistical forces.

Further, aircraft support will be supplied by units stationed at various east coast and Gulf coast ports.

Thirdly, the President today signed Executive Order 11058 which authorized me as Secretary of Defense to call members of the Reserve under terms of the Congressional Resolution dated October 3, 1962, known as Public Law 87-736, to active duty for periods of not more than 12 months so long as not more than 150,000 men were called under that Order. And further, this Executive Order provides me with authority to extend enlistments, appointments, period of active duty, and periods of active duty for training for personnel now on active duty.

And as acting under the terms of that Executive Order, I have this evening instructed the Secretary of the Navy to extend the enlistments, appointments and periods of active duty of both Navy and Marine personnel now on active duty.

This to provide the Navy with the forces necessary to increase their rate of activity, to the point necessary to support the quarantine and to insure the Marines with sufficient forces to meet whatever requirements are placed upon them, particularly the reinforcement of Guantanamo. I will be very happy to try to answer your questions.

In order that we may have an orderly exchange of questions and answers, I suggest that you state your name and the paper or radio or other media that you represent.

QUESTION: Bush, Navy Times. Sir, are these extensions for the full year?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: The extensions will be for whatever period required, not necessarily 12 months.

QUESTION; Are they selective, Mr. Secretary?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: May I have your name and paper?

QUESTION: Norris, the Washington Post. Are they selective or is everyone being called?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: No, but with a few exceptions for unusual hardship cases they will not be selective but universal.

QUESTION: Goulding, Cleveland Plain Dealer. Do you know, Mr. Secretary, when you anticipate the first intercept of a Soviet Block ship?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: No, I don't because we can't anticipate the movements exactly of either their ships or ours in the period intervening between now and 10 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time the effective time of the ~~conflict~~ *Alaskan* ~~conflict~~ *Alaskan*

QUESTION: Evening Star. How many reservists do you contemplate calling up and of what class?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: We are taking no steps at the present time to call up reservists on inactive duty to active duty. I would distinguish the extension of enlistments, which I have just announced for personnel in the Navy and Marine Corps from the call from inactive to active duty of individuals in the Reserves and Guard units.

QUESTION: Ross, Chicago Sun Times. Could you tell us when the first intercept would be at hand if ships that are proceeding towards Cuba continue at the course and speed?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: No. As I mentioned a moment ago, I can't predict the exact movements of either Soviet ships or U. S. vessels between now and the time the quarantine becomes effective at 10:00 A.M., Eastern Daylight Time tomorrow. I can tell you, if it is of interest to you, that we believe there are about 25 Soviet ships moving toward Cuba, merchant ships. We believe there are some 10 or 12 Soviet ships in Cuban ports. We believe there are about 25 Soviet ships moving away from Cuba to return to their home ports.

QUESTION: English, London Express. Do you know, Mr. Secretary, if there are any Soviet naval vessels anywhere in the South Atlantic?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: We will not be reporting upon our knowledge of the location of Soviet naval craft.

QUESTION: Raymond, New York Times. Have our patrols spotted any of the Soviet ships moving from the course that they had earlier today than when we first saw them? Are there any indications that the Soviet ships are rendezvousing?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: We have no reason to believe that Soviet ships have moved from courses on which they were yesterday.

QUESTION: Nofziger, Copley. You did not mention the submarines in the ships that ~~were participating~~. Does this mean none will?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: No, I indicated certain major craft, but I didn't indicate all of the craft. Submarines, of course, will participate to the extent necessary.

QUESTION: Rogers, New York Herald Tribune. How close to Cuba are the closest Soviet merchant ships in terms of distance and hours?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: Soviet ships are moving in a stream toward Cuba at varying distances and without endeavoring to indicate their space

uniformly, they are at such a large number of varying points from Cuba, I can't answer the question other than to say that many are close to the shores of Cuba.

QUESTION: How close, Sir?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: Next question.

QUESTION: Finney, Times. What are going to be the territorial waters which we will recognize in the course of this blockade?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: I prefer simply to say the legal territorial waters.

QUESTION: Last night you said that you thought an interception might be made within a day or two. What you said this evening seems to throw this up in the air a little bit. That leaves us 24 hours in keeping with your statement of last night. Is that a fair assumption?

SECRETARY mcNAMARA: I don't wish to make any assumption other than to say that my statement last night is still a reasonable one. I have 24 hours to produce.

(Laughter)

QUESTION: What are your plans or can you tell us of any plans to intercept planes that might be carrying nuclear bombs?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: The specific language of the Proclamation, I know many of you have not had an opportunity to see it, and I will simply read one sentence that relates somewhat to this question.

"The forces under my command (this is to say under the Command of the President) are ordered to interdict, subject to certain instructions contained in the Proclamation, the delivery of offensive weapons and associated material to Cuba."

Those are the instructions we have been given and those are the instructions we will carry out. A second point that relates to the question is that to the best of my knowledge there have been only about seven Soviet transport aircraft moving into Cuba in the last 120 days.

QUESTION: Kraar, Time Magazine. Last night you explained how this situation, the buildup of missiles in Cuba changes from hour to hour. I wonder if you could bring us up to date on what has happened. Are the missiles still there? Are more going up, are they being dismantled?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: The President stated last night in his speech to the nation that he was ordering continued surveillance of the movement of offensive weapons into Cuba and of the offensive weapons there. Acting under those instructions we have carried out surveillance. We have no information that would lead me to change the statements I made to you last night.

Work has progressed to the best of my knowledge but I can't speak with any definitive detail.

QUESTION: CBS. What happens between right now and 10:00 A.M. tomorrow, if you have an interdiction to deal with?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: The quarantine does not become effective until 10:00 a.m. tomorrow, Eastern Daylight Time.

QUESTION: There will be no shots across anybody's bow?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: There will be no steps taken under the action authorized by the quarantine until the effective time of the quarantine which is 10:00 a.m., Eastern Daylight Time.

QUESTION: Will steps be taken under any other provision?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: No

QUESTION: NBC News. Could you tell us a little bit more, sir, about the exact orders under which the skippers of the ships which are used in the interdiction are operating? For example, if it comes to a point of refusal to heave to, refusal to allow inspections and there is a situation presented as was mentioned last night of sinking a ship, does the skipper of the ship act on his own or must he first contact somebody else and who is the somebody else? Where do the orders come from?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: The commander of the U. S. vessel involved will act under orders which have been issued by me through the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Admiral Dennison, and through him, to the local ship Commanders. These orders prescribe particular procedures to be followed. The essence of them is that the U. S. ship, by every means available to it, will communicate with the Soviet or other vessel involved, moving toward Cuba, requesting the vessel to stop, and accept inspection and search. If the vessel does not stop, refuses to heed the instructions, force

will be applied to assure that it does stop. The minimum amount of force for that purpose will be used, taking care to achieve the minimum damage to the vessel and to the personnel on it.

QUESTION: Greene, New York Daily News. When were those orders actually sent to the fleet?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: Ten minutes after 7 tonight.

QUESTION: Washington Post. Are any of the Soviet merchant vessels known to be armed?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: I can't answer the question. I don't have sufficiently detailed knowledge to answer it.

QUESTION: Will some of those vessels, do you think, reach the Cuban harbors before the 10 A.M., deadline?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: I cannot answer the question directly. As I mentioned earlier, it is impossible for me to predict with any accuracy the specific movements of Soviet vessels between now and 10 A.M., tomorrow morning. I simply say that the vessels are moving toward Cuba at a variety of positions. I think it is reasonable to assume that it is possible one may move into port between now and 10 A.M., in the morning.

QUESTION: Loewe, North German Radio. Mr. Secretary, do you have any knowledge if those ships you described underway to Cuba, whether they have missiles on board or not, or do you know anything about their specific load?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: I have no knowledge of the specific cargo of the Soviet vessels other than that the number of Soviet ships moving into Cuba in the past weeks have been large, as the President has indicated on previous occasions. The amount of offensive weapons in Cuba is large as I described to you last night, and I think it is a fair presumption that some of the Soviet vessels moving toward Cuba are therefore carrying offensive weapons.

QUESTION: Dodd, Chicago Tribune. The orders issued tonight give any instructions on handling or possible escorting of Soviet submarines?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: The orders state that the U.S. ships will protect themselves against attack during the quarantine operation.

QUESTION: Garwood, UPI. Does the interdiction apply to oil or petroleum?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: The Proclamation states as follows, that for the purpose of this Proclamation the following are declared to be prohibited materiel: Surface-to-surface missiles, bomber aircraft, bombs, air-to-surface rockets and guided missiles, warheads for any of the above weapons, mechanical or electronic equipment to support or operate those items, and any other classes of materiel designated by the Secretary of Defense for the purpose of effectuating this Proclamation.

I have not designated oil, as of the present moment, as one of the prohibited materials.

QUESTION: McDougall, Los Angeles Times. Have there been any menacing moves toward Guantanamo and are you concerned about the Soviet cancellation of leaves?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: There have been no menacing moves that I know of toward Guantanamo. I will not be commenting now or later on any knowledge we may have of Soviet military preparations, and therefore I am afraid I can't answer your second question.

QUESTION: Wilson, Minneapolis Tribune. Have you any plans now to restrict movement of dependents of service personnel overseas to other areas?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: The question is do we have any plans now to restrict the movement of dependents overseas to areas other than to Guantanamo, and the answer is No, we have no such plans at this time.

QUESTION: New York Times. Could you tell us what other non-Soviet ships are at the moment headed for Cuba and what your plans are in relation to them?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: There are a substantial number of other ships moving toward Cuba at the present time. Essentially the same number as have been moving toward Cuba at any other similar time in recent weeks. The movement is not exceptional. It is neither large nor small in relation to the past. We do plan, under the terms of the quarantine, to halt and inspect the cargoes of ships of all nations moving into Cuba.

QUESTION: Reichek, Mc Graw - Hill Publications. Can you tell us anything about the numbers of missiles that have been sited in Cuba; and the second part, will you release any pictures that have been shown here and at the State Department and if not, why not?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: First the question, can I tell you anything about the number of missiles that have been sited in Cuba. The missiles fall into four different categories. Surface-to-air missiles associated with air defense facilities; secondly, sea surface-to-surface missiles, mounted on patrol boats and used presumably in terms of coastal defense against naval vessels:

thirdly, medium-range ballistic missiles, which I indicated last night in the installations in Cuba are mobile. They are planned to have a capability to be deactivated, moved, reactivated on a new site, and ready for operations within a period of about six days, this being a function, of course, of their mobility. Those missiles, as I mentioned yesterday, have a range of about 1000 nautical miles.

The fourth category of missiles is the intermediate-range ballistic missile, to be established at fixed sites, requiring fixed constructions at those sites, and having ranges of approximately 2200 nautical miles. I cannot give you the numbers of these missiles. They are classified. The island, however, has a rather extensive air defense system, utilizing the surface-to-air missiles. There are several, at least, of the second class, the missiles mounted on patrol boats, and numbers of the mobile, medium-range missiles and intermediate-range missiles.

QUESTION: Norman, Newsweek. What plans do you have, sir, of either dismantling or neutralizing these fixed or mobile installations of missiles?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: As I mentioned last night in talking to some of you, the objective of the quarantine is to prevent the movement into Cuba of additional offensive weapons, and to ultimately obtain the withdrawal or elimination of the

offensive weapons now located in Cuba. The President, speaking to the Nation last night, stated further action would be taken to achieve the second objective.

QUESTION: In your enumeration of the missiles, did I understand you to say that you have now found that IRBM's are in Cuba, not just the sites?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: I am not prepared to say whether we have found that IRBM missiles are in Cuba. But IRBM installations and associated equipment are there. I am not saying that the missiles are or are not. I am simply not distinguishing between the missiles and the equipment.

QUESTION: You did last night, the way I remember it.

SECRETARY McNAMARA: I am simply saying tonight that the intermediate range ballistic missile installations are in Cuba.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, could we continue with Mr. Reichek's question and answer the second part? May we now have those pictures released and may we see them in a more close-up fashion?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: The security officers are still examining this question. I know your interest in them. I would like to see them released to you. We have certain problems associated with our surveillance operations. It is necessary to maintain security in relation to those. Frankly, I can't answer your question. I will try to have an answer to you tonight.

QUESTION: I am told that they have already appeared on British television.

SECRETARY McNAMARA: I can't answer that question, either.

QUESTION: Bush, Navy Times. Mr. Secretary, can you tell us how many people will be affected by this extension order, Navy and Marines?

SECRETARY McNAMARA It depends on the period of time during which the order is in effect, and I therefore can't tell you the numbers involved.

QUESTION Larabee, New England Newspapers. You have explained your instructions on halting naval vessels. What instructions are given to halt Soviet aircraft and how would that work?

SECRETARY McNAMARA I am not able tonight to discuss in detail with you those instructions. We have issued such instructions, however.

QUESTION Goulding, Cleveland Plain Dealer. Is it feasible that Soviet submarines could carry any of the items on your list, and can you tell us, if so, can you tell us anything about instructions given in that regard?

SECRETARY McNAMARA It is conceivable that Soviet submarines could be used to transport offensive weapons to Cuba. The proclamation, I think,

is quite clear, that we are ordered to interdict the delivery of offensive weapons moving to Cuba. All means of delivery are to be interdicted, and the orders that have been given to the responsible commanders have so stated. We do not wish to describe in detail the procedures we will use in response to submarines.

QUESTION: ABC. If this minimum force proves inadequate to stop a Soviet vessel, will the Naval commander on the scene then have the authority without further check with Washington to sink the Soviet ship if this becomes necessary?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: The Naval commander has authority to take whatever action is required to attain the end, which is the interdiction of the movement of offensive weapons into Cuba. He has been instructed to use the minimum force required to achieve that objective, but he has been authorized to use whatever force is required to achieve it.

QUESTION: Corddry, UPI. Does your order on the extension of enlistments on active duty periods that no one will be out of the Navy until further notice, which notice may be as long as a year?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: With very few exceptions of unusual hardship cases, that is correct. That order will become effective tomorrow morning. I have forgotten the exact hour. I believe it is 2:00 A.M., Eastern Daylight time. I am not absolutely certain of that.

QUESTION: Norris, Washington Post. Can you say whether the MRBM's are now operational and ready to fire on the United States?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: I think it is fair to assume certain of the missile systems are operational at the present time.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, are the Russian vessels now under way to Cuba a part of an armed convoy?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: No. Not to my knowledge, the Russian vessels appear to be moving as part of normal merchant traffic.

QUESTION: Scripps - Howard. Mr. Secretary, what has been your discussion on how long you will allow to eliminate the offensive weapons in Cuba?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: I am sorry, I couldn't hear you.

QUESTION: What has been your discussion with the President on

how much time transpires before you eliminate the offensive weapons now in Cuba?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: I think that the President's message will have to stand as he gave it last night. Further action will be taken to achieve that end.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, several reporters have requested permission to go to Guantanamo, what is going to be your policy on this?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: It is unlikely that we will be able to meet your requests, valid as they may be, in the next day or two. As you can well imagine, we are moving very fast and we just lack the accommodations to take care of such a request at this time. Mr. Sylvester is making plans to meet such requests as promptly as possible.

QUESTION: Wilson, Minneapolis Tribune. On the basis of the information you have about these medium range ballistic missiles, can you tell us what size warhead they would carry a thousand miles?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: The warheads would be of medium size

QUESTION: What is that?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: I -- (laughter)

QUESTION: What does that mean?

QUESTION: Bigger than a bread box?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: I can't and shouldn't elaborate on that tonight.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, could you tell us a little about the character of the boarding parties? Will they be armed, who will make them up and how will they operate?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: The boarding parties will be armed and they will be made up of personnel from the U.S. Navy and associated Marine forces. They will be in number sufficient to their task as determined by the circumstances in which they will be operating.

QUESTION: Rogers, N Y Herald Tribune. A two-part question on missiles. One, are there nuclear warheads on the island; and two, you mentioned that it is fair to assume that certain of the missile systems are operational. But you also listed four missile systems Could you say which of these are operational?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: I think that is a good question. I am sorry I wasn't more specific on the answer a few minutes ago. When I said I thought it was fair to assume that certain of the missile systems were operational, I was speaking specifically of the ballistic missile systems, and particularly the mobile medium range ballistic missile systems.

Secondly, as to the question, are there nuclear warheads

on the island, I can't answer the question specifically. With the intelligence resources available to us, it is extremely difficult for us to specifically

identify nuclear warheads. But I think in view of the fact that we know and have identified substantial numbers of missiles that can only operate with nuclear warheads, it is fair to assume such warheads are on the Island

QUESTION: Sarah McClendon. Did the Defense Department get any reports of Soviet subs operating in this area before, and did they run these reports down? What did they find?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: The Defense Department does run down every report we receive of Soviet subs. I don't mean to be facetious I really can't -- I have the information but I can't answer your question. We will stop discussing our knowledge of the operations of Soviet warcraft. This is the reason why I cannot answer.

QUESTION: I am talking about in the past. But you mean for security reasons you can't discuss --

SECRETARY McNAMARA: Yes. That is correct. I wish I could but I can't.

QUESTION: New York Post. Would it have been possible for the constructors of these missile sites the Russians and their Cuban laborers, presumably, to have camouflaged these sites during the period of construction if they had so chosen?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: I think that it is possible to camouflage the sites and I believe they could have done so during the construction period had they so chosen. I think that there is evidence that they were operating with such speed and such haste that they did not take the time necessary to camouflage.

QUESTION: They apparently were well aware that we had surveillance craft going in the area pretty regularly, weren't they?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: I can't speak of what they knew.

QUESTION: Baltimore Sun. Getting back to the missile systems, sir, when you say it is fair to assume that some are operational, are you referring to sections of a particular missile or an entire missile as ready to fire?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: I am referring to the capability of a missile to fire.

QUESTION: One can be fired?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: Yes.

QUESTION: Corddry, UPI. Mr. Secretary, why do you think they acted with such speed and haste? Do you think it was attuned to some crisis elsewhere, later in the year or early next year?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: I don't believe it is appropriate for me to speculate on the intentions and motives of the Soviet Union in this situation.

QUESTION: Wendell, Fairchild Publications. Mr. Secretary, have you contacted in anyway major missile manufacturers or other major defense suppliers as to their ability to produce more speedily?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: No. We have underway an accelerated procurement program. I think most of you will recall that last year, early in the year, the President submitted three supplemental budget requests to the Congress. The Congress acted favorably on those requests. They provided

for the acceleration of the construction of POLARIS submarines, several different missile systems, and the procurement of substantial quantities of additional aircraft and weapons for our ground forces. All of those procurement actions were accelerated. The budget for Fiscal '63, as you know, was submitted to Congress at a level approximately \$8 billion above the original proposal for 1962. That budget is being placed on procurement as rapidly as possible. Every action is being taken to procure both the items authorized by the expenditures, supported by the expenditures of Fiscal '62.

and '63, and we see no need nor opportunity to accelerate those actions at the present time.

QUESTION: Golding, Cleveland Plain Dealer. I believe, sir, you have said publicly that Berlin is the major crisis faced by America today. Do you still feel this to be true?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: I have stated publicly, and I still believe that the crisis over Berlin is fundamental to our national security and this because our national security is founded on the NATO Alliance, which is being put to test by the Berlin crisis.

QUESTION: Ross, Chicago Sun Times. I believe it was stated last night that the first indications we have of Soviet missiles were last Monday. Is that an accurate statement; and secondly, how does that square with flat statements by Defense spokesmen within the last week that we had no indication of any offensive weaponry within Cuba?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: The first evidence, the first hard evidence was received by me at 10:00 P.M. a week ago last night and was presented to the President at 9:00 o'clock Tuesday morning. This was the first hard evidence giving any indication, and that was but partial of the movement of offensive weapons into Cuba.

The President immediately ordered increased surveillance which we carried out during the remainder of the week. The results of that increased surveillance became available almost literally every hour throughout the week. The interpreters and analysts of both the Defense Department and the other intelligence agencies in the Government worked 24 hours a day analyzing that information, and the final definitive report, based upon that information, was presented to the President Saturday -- I beg your pardon -- Sunday at 2:30 in the afternoon.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, are there any indications that our merchant ships may be harassed in waters near the Soviet Union?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: I can't answer the question. I have seen no evidence of it as yet.

QUESTION: Are we prepared to do things?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: We are prepared for whatever eventualities develop in that connection.

QUESTION: Do you propose to disperse your top-level military headquarters, given this threat in Cuba?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: We have no plans to disperse the headquarters other than the contingency plans which, of course, are always available for application should the need arise.

QUESTION. Gay, National Negro Press. Assuming that the Soviets have introduced sufficient quantities of materiel, what is the attitude toward the introduction of sizable numbers of new technical personnel?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA. The quarantine orders at the present time do not include prohibitions against the movement of personnel into Cuba.

I think one more question, gentlemen

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you say that our ships are going to defend themselves. If the ships are fired upon, will the return fire be limited only to the ship or ships that are firing upon us, or are you prepared, then, to attack the mainland of Cuba?

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: The ships will take whatever action is necessary to defend themselves, using force appropriate to the circumstances.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY MCNAMARA: Thank you.

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